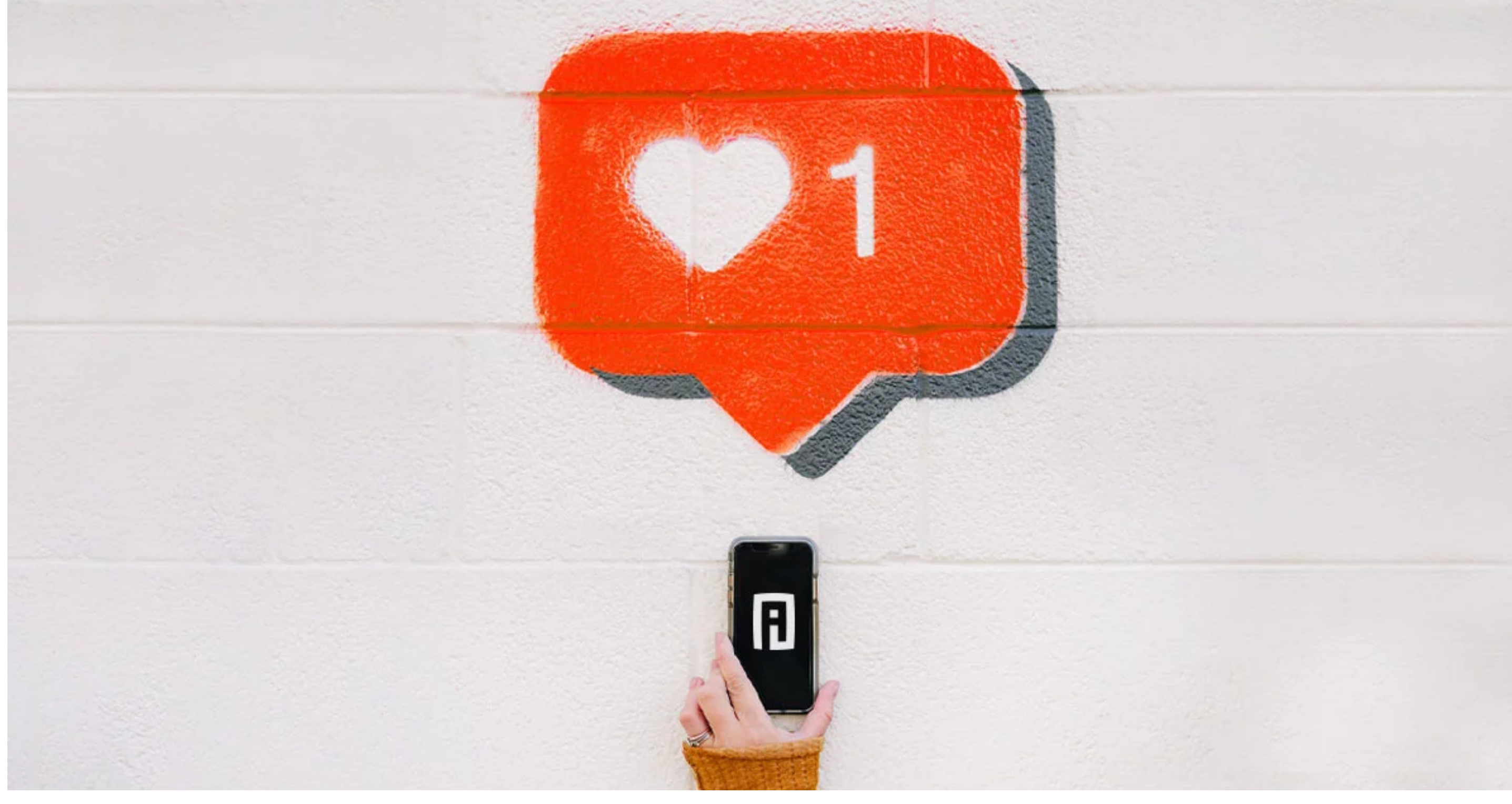


Let's Get Social: Your Guide to Managing Your Brand's Community

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Are you being social on social media? While you may have a bulletproof content strategy and unwavering posting cadence, that alone isn't enough in today's digital world. To build stronger relationships with your current *and* future consumers and increase brand awareness, you must venture into the often under-charted, intimidating waters of monitoring and responding to consumers.

Truthfully, the act of engaging with your brand's community is what helps make social, well, social. By not actively talking to your audience, you might be missing out on insightful information into your demographic's behaviors that could further inform your marketing efforts across various mediums.

At a glance, an effective monitoring and response strategy can act as your front line with customers, helping you discover how consumers feel about your brand, related products or services, and even give you a glimpse into more beneficial nuggets of information about your industry, brand positioning, and more. Oftentimes, keeping your ear to the ground can lead to very real insights that can inform strategic, creative decisions that resonate with your audience.

Defining Community Management

What does it mean to monitor and respond? **Community management**, or the act of “monitoring” and “responding,” is just that: Managing your community through social listening, engagement, outreach, conversations, reactions, and more.

By managing your community in this way, you can build authentic relationships with your consumers. After all, [research from Sprout Social](#) finds that around 59% of people reach out to brands on social media when they have a good experience, while 40% reach out to talk about poor experiences. Even more importantly, around 47% of people reach out on social channels to ask questions about a brand's products/services. If you're not actively managing or monitoring your community, you risk missing out on brand wins, potential PR concerns, and moments that could build brand affinity.

Even better, by monitoring your landscape of loyal, engaged consumers, you have the opportunity to tap into future brand representatives, like **ambassadors** or **influencers**. Oftentimes, the perfect rep can be found by scrolling through apps like Instagram or TikTok while monitoring your community's activity!

Engaging With Your Community

Now that you know *why* to engage, let's talk about *how*.

That truly is the question for a lot of brands. When brands begin crafting a monitoring and response strategy, they're often overwhelmed by the amount of content there is to engage with. Here's a lesser-known secret: You don't have to engage with all posts the same way...and some, you don't even have to engage with at all! Let's breakdown a few of our personal recommendations on when to engage and when to keep scrolling on by:

**How you engage with your community is not one-size fits all. For a more in-depth recommendations, drop us a line!*

Types of Engagement

Engagement goes far beyond commenting! For each social channel out there, there are a wealth of different ways your brand can engage with consumers. Here are a few of our favorites:

- Like or React
- Share
- Comment
- Quote or Retweet
- Tag
- Save

Knowing when to use each of the above forms of engagement is the next hurdle—and that's where a brand **response matrix** comes into play!

Building a Response Matrix

A **response matrix** is a guide that your designated community manager will use when interacting with consumers on social. A typical matrix outlines potential comments from your followers, recommendations on how to engage with them, and often highlights to risk of engaging (or not engaging) with those consumers. Check out this example for a closer look at the functionality of a response matrix:

Creating a matrix can help you track customer FAQs, concerns, brand wins, and more—all in one central location that your team can reference as needed. Additionally, a matrix helps ensure your entire team provides honest, often legal-approved responses that fit the way your brand walks and talks on social (in other words, your tone and voice).

Types of Monitoring

By monitoring in a **reactive** and **proactive** manner (defined below), you can arm your marketing teams with valuable information and insights they need to create content across all mediums.

Reactive monitoring is as it sounds: Engaging as a *reaction* to a comment, tag, retweet, and more on your social channels. These types of engagements will pop up as notifications.

Proactive monitoring is when you *proactively* search for opportunities to engage. Here, you can engage with posts or conversations that are not necessarily related to your brand but ones that relate to your overall industry, products, services, or even brand values. You can seek out proactive monitoring opportunities by checking out your followers' accounts, perusing related brand hashtags, or searching key words.

For example, if your company sells home furnishings, you might want to proactively monitor conversations related to home renovations, décor ideas, first-time homebuyers, and more. By proactively monitoring related conversations, you can generate new leads, increase exposure and purchasing, and gain a steady following.

Dos, Don'ts, and Best Practices

Ready to go forth and socialize? Before you start firing out engagements, be sure you're following a set of best practices for connecting on social.

Need a little guidance? Check out our top dos, don'ts, and overall best practices!

Monitoring Best Practices: Do

- **Stick to your brand's tone and voice:** Keep a reference of key brand personas or demographic characteristics when engaging to humanize your brand and prioritize an overall positive sentiment.
- **Call them by their name:** Using names or tags when speaking directly to consumers makes them feel like they're receiving a personal, individualized response. By encouraging one-on-one conversations, you can build brand affinity and foster a greater sense of community.
- **Be honest:** Truthfulness goes a long way. But, if you don't feel comfortable sharing certain responses with *all* on your followers, it's best to move these types of conversations to DM.
- **Match their enthusiasm:** Use emojis and other appropriate language your demographic understands to help you convey the same enthusiasm as your consumer and show that you're one of them.
- **Generate an evolving list of 'addressable' consumer posts:** In your response matrix, be sure to carve out space for call center employees, customer services reps, sales teams, and even legal personnel to track appropriate responses, claims, or adverse events.

Monitoring Best Practices: Don'ts

- **Put the onus on the customer:** The age old saying of 'the customer is always right' applies to social media, too! If a consumer is turning to your channels to complain about a product, service, or experience, it's best to take onus of it. Steer clear of responses like “we're sorry you had a problem” or “sorry you felt that way.” When engaging, take ownership with responses like “it appears we missed the mark” or “we'd love to help make it right.”
- **Ignore engagers:** Even a simple 'like' is enough to make your followers feel seen and increase your changes for future engagement! Leaving comments out on your page without any engagement could lessen your brand loyalty. Truthfully, the only occasions in which *not* engaging with a customer is okay is when they are being hateful, posting spam, fighting with others, and disobeying brand/community guidelines. In these instances, you may want to consider hiding, deleting, removing, or blocking the user or their comments.

Let's Create Together!

Ready to increase brand loyalty and keep the conversation going among your best consumers? Explore how AGAIN Interactive can help you build a winning monitor and response strategy that's tailored to your brand's needs! We've had great success managing communities, even integrating with customer care departments and call centers, garnering insights that are important to developing your brand voice. Drop us a line at info@againinteractive.com. Your success is how we measure ours.

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Samantha Sekora—a member of the creative team here at AGAIN—is a cutting-edge writer and lover of all things social. When she's not typing away, you might find Samantha off doing some of her favorite things, like roller skating and antiques. All while sporting her signature sunflower pin.

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